Revision of visa rules by USA

3898. SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA: SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item published in "The Tribune" dated the 12th April, 2002 captioned 'USA Unveils New Visa Rules';

(b) if so, the details of the revised rules governing visas for businessmen, tourists and students to enhance homeland security and to strengthen/control immigration;

(c) whether the US Immigration and Naturalisation Service has also made any changes to the standards for extension of stay, limiting the conditions under which a B visitor can obtain an extension under 'Unexpected or compelling humanitarian reasons' if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the measures Government propose to take to redress the grievances of Indian visitors?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) As per the information available with the Ministry of External Affairs, the main change implemented so far relates to student visas. The individuals who wish to study in the United States of America must now obtain student visas abroad or must have been designated as a "prospective student" before admission to the United States. Change of status to "student" will no longer be permitted within the United States unless the applicant was designated a "prospective student" before entry into the US.

Other proposed changes are regarding the length of stay of the traveller which are still under consideration of the US Government.

(d) The formulation of the visa policy is a sovereign right of any Government. Government will study the new visa regulations as and

when they are implemented and determine the course of action accordingly.

Visit of Russian delegation

3899. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a Russia delegation visited India in the 1st week of February, 2002;

(b) if so, the subjects of mutual interest discussed with them;

(c) the agreement reached during the visit and other details in this regard; and

(d) the assistance expected therefrom?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir. Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Mr. Igor Ivanov visited India on 3-4 February, 2002. Then Deputy Chairman (Deputy Prime Minister) of the Government of the Russian Federation Mr. Ilya Klebanov visited India from 5-8 February, 2002.

(b) to (d) Mr. Igor Ivanov held detailed discussions with the External Affairs Minister on a wide range of bilateral, regional and international issues. An Indo-Russian Joint Statement was signed by the two Foreign Ministers and issued at the end of this visit. Mr. Ivnov also had a separate meeting with Raksha Mantri Mr. George Fernandes.

During the visit of Mr. Ilya Klebanov, the Eighth Session of the Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC) and the Second Session of the Indo-Russian Inter Governmental Commission on Military-Technical Cooperation were held. Protocols were signed at the end of both these meetings. Mr. Klebanov also called on the President and Prime Minister of India. He met with the External Affairs Minister and Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and National Security Advisor.